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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 ABUJA 000965

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [NI](#)

SUBJECT: MEETINGS WITH PRESIDENTIAL HOPEFULS KALU AND MAKARFI

REF: A. ABUJA 458

[B](#). 04 LAGOS 2592

[C](#). 03 ABUJA 2046

Classified By: Ambassador John Campbell for Reasons 1.4 (B & D).

[1](#). (C) Summary: Governors Kalu of Abia State and Makarfi of Kaduna State paid separate courtesy calls to the Ambassador recently amongst their campaigns for Nigeria's presidency in 2007 (Ref A). Both were critical of President Obasanjo, continuing ideas they had raised with us well before the National Intelligence Council piece on Nigeria as possible failed state became front page news here in May. The two governors differed in stridency; Kalu saying, "If Obasanjo violates the Constitution by staying past 2007, we will fight back" compared to Makarfi's "If Obasanjo does not start consulting about a successor for 2007, there will be a problem." On a non-presidential issue, the upcoming census welcomed or feared for what it may say on Nigeria's ethnic and confessional makeup, the Christian Kalu wanted ethnicity and religion tabulated so as to prove Christians a majority and his own Igbos in significant numbers everywhere in Nigeria. Makarfi, a Muslim from a state often wracked by ethnic and religious violence, said he had urged dropping ethnicity and religion from the census across Nigeria to prevent divisiveness. End Summary.

KALU

[2](#). (C) Abia's Gov. Orji Kalu visited the Ambassador May 25. He began by telling the Ambassador that Nigeria is in real trouble and Nigerians' goodwill for Obasanjo is receding. "Obasanjo's men are stealing everything." Kalu said he was concerned about the poor, saying that if especially the young people cannot get jobs, they will get guns. He claimed empathy because he had become poorer personally over his tenure as governor, and blamed Obasanjo for revoking the charters of Kalu's bank, Kalu's airline, and Kalu's oil service businesses. He had worked on Obasanjo's 2003 election campaign, but had alienated Obasanjo by ensuring a fair election in Abia instead of the rigged vote collation totals he said Obasanjo's men preferred.

[3](#). (C) Be that as it may, Kalu said Obasanjo knew several PDP governors in the Delta (Kalu is from just above the Delta) were stealing billions of Naira. He also claimed Nigeria's federal government was taking 1.1 billion Naira (about 8.4 million USD) from his Abia State's yearly revenues as collection of "bad debts" from Kalu's predecessors. "If Obasanjo violates the Constitution by staying past 2007, we will fight back," Kalu said. (Comment: Kalu has threatened civil unrest in private before, notably in the Ref B conversation with ConGen Lagos, if Obasanjo tried for a third term. End Comment.)

[4](#). (C) Kalu said Obasanjo's plan was to destroy the ruling PDP, so all Nigerians would have to turn to him again in [2007](#). Obasanjo was already refusing to implement the budget that the president had signed after it had been passed by the National Assembly -- and thus was openly violating the Constitution. Obasanjo was violating the Constitution in many way, from A to Z, Kalu exclaimed, so it would not be out of character for him to violate the Constitution on trying for a third civilian term.

[5](#). (C) The Ambassador noted that the USG supports economic reform, good governance, Nigeria's regional stability efforts across Africa, and improvements to the elections process in [2007](#). What would be an appropriate role for foreigners to take concerning the 2007 elections?

[6](#). (C) Kalu responded, "Bring observers who can say an election is not free and fair, if it happens this time." He also wanted labor, lawyers, women and other organizations to be represented in the Independent National Electoral Commission. "Make sure the INEC Chairman is a credible man." Kalu said he liked interim Chairman Maurice Iwu, a fellow Igbo and a friend for many years. (Comment: Iwu is better known to post (Ref C) as the author, and public champion, of an proposal to give INEC powers to de-register political parties. In the context of INEC's being appointed by the ruling party, the proposal was widely seen as a threat to the

opposition, and was later withdrawn. End Comment.)

17. (C) Kalu said the national census to be done this fall must count religion and ethnicity. (Note: at present it will not ask either.) The census needed to show that Christians are the majority in Nigeria, and that northern Nigeria is not monolithically Muslim. When PolCouns (notetaker) asked why this would be useful, Kalu backed off and said asking about religion would be bad, but ethnicity should be asked because there was a need to show that Igboes were a substantial proportion of the population even outside the southeast where they were a majority (such as in Kalu's Abia State). Kalu added that counting people by religion might cause trouble, and even said that counting ethnicity might not be a good idea.

18. (C) After apparently fishing for what he thought the Ambassador might consider the "right" answer on religion and ethnicity in the census, Kalu switched abruptly to say Nigeria's Code of Conduct Bureau was wrong in taking him to court for having a foreign bank account in violation of Nigeria's constitutional ban on such for governors, the VP and President. He said, and gave the Ambassador a letter saying, that he did have such an account but had declared it with his other assets as required by another part of Nigeria's constitution, and that the Bureau's complaint was "undemocratic, illegal, and deliberately designed to intimidate and emasculate me for the simple reason that I have declared an intention to aspire to the presidency of Nigeria come 2007."

MAKARFI

19. (C) Kaduna Governor Ahmed Makarfi paid a call on the Ambassador May 26. Makarfi came alone, unlike Kalu and entourage, and said he wanted to brief the Ambassador about the ongoing National Conference. Makarfi said the main points of contention had become related resource control issues of north-south rivalry over oil revenues, adding "regions" as another layer of government (and budget) between state and national government, and rotation of the presidency between areas of the country.

110. (C) Makarfi said he had traveled from his native north to several southern states several times of late, and he thought southern governors, even of the oil producing states such as Rivers and Delta, did not have a united front. The confab probably would push the issue of distribution of oil revenues to a technical committee after the confab ended, although it might make a moral commitment to greater revenue for oil states from the federal government's share. If all revenue from off-shore oil went to the federal government, then such a redistribution of the federal share might be acceptable to all.

111. (C) Whether or not to add a "regions" layer of government and budget was equally murky, Makarfi thought. A group of delegates calling itself the "Middle Belt Forum" favored regions, but middle belt governors were opposed. Lagos and Ekiti States in the south, like Kaduna in the north, were opposed to region governments because they were already getting less budget than they were entitled, having comparatively few, large Local Government Areas (another budget/government layer below the states). With opposition to region governments spread across the regions, Makarfi thought there would be no new region governments and no new states either.

112. (C) Makarfi thought rotation of the presidency among the regions was losing ground. At most the confab would make a moral commitment to rotating between north and south, not the present six regions (Northwest, North Central, Northeast, Southwest, South South and Southeast) usually associated with things political in Nigeria. More likely, Makarfi said, was that the rotation issue would be decided within political parties, and not show up at all in any attempts to amend the constitutional amendment.

113. (C) Having "stumbled" upon the issue of the 2007 presidential election, Makarfi said that election must be handled carefully, and he was worried that Obasanjo was waiting so long to designate a successor. He said, "If Obasanjo does not start consulting about a successor for 2007, there will be a problem." Where transparency was needed that Obasanjo was not seeking to succeed himself again, Makarfi explained, Obasanjo was allowing the issue to stay unclear. Obasanjo had to start using the goodwill and diplomatic skills he had built; "if he did not," Makarfi said, "the (USG) National Intelligence Council's prophecies (that Nigeria might become a failed state) could come true."

114. (C) Makarfi said Obasanjo needed to start discussing transition now also to gain his successor's agreement to continue reforms. He said he understood why Obasanjo did not want any from the older generation -- Babangida, Atiku and Buhari -- to succeed him, and Makarfi thought most Nigerians

agreed with Obasanjo on this. But Obasanjo needed to start building a specific alternative now; otherwise, other politicians at the ruling PDP's convention later this year would find unexpected alternatives in ways Obasanjo could not control.

15. (C) Makarfi digressed to point out that he had publicly and privately called for the upcoming national census not to count ethnicity or religion, after 2003 (and likely 2007) candidate Buhari had said he thought even having a census would be disruptive. Makarfi said he had pushed hard for that result and (with the support of the EU providing much of the census funding) had carried the day. Nigeria needed good statistics from the census on many things -- occupations, ages, education, access to health care, etc. -- but not for religion. Religion would not be used for planning development, but rather for Muslim and Christian demagogues to energize hatred for their own political ends. Nigeria, he thought, needed to get beyond that.

CAMPBELL